NOTES OF INTERIM COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, 19 July 1946
10:00 A.M. - 1:15 P.M.

PRESENT:

Members of Committee
Dr. Vannevar Bush
Dr. Karl T. Compton
Dr. James B. Conant
Mr. George L. Harrison, Acting Chairman

By Invitation
Maj. Gen. Leslie R. Groves
Brig. Gen. Kenneth C. Royall
Mr. William L. Marbury
Lt. George S. Allan
Lt. George M. Duff, Jr.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCIENTIFIC PANEL:

The Committee considered a memorandum prepared by
Dr. Bush in consultation with Dr. Comant which they proposed
should be sent by the Committee to the Scientific Panel. The
memorandum requested the Panel to study in some detail the
future program of research and development in this field with
particular reference to the scale of effort that should be planned
for in terms of scientific and technical personnel and financial
outlay. Dr. Bush explained that it was thought desirable to secure
at this time the recommendations of the Panel in detail so that the
Committee might gain a more specific understanding of the dimensions
of this subject and its implications to the scientific resources
of the nation and thus be in a position to consider the balance
that must be struck between this program and other fields of
scientific research in the post-war period. The Committee
agreed that, subject to minor verbal changes, the memorandum
should go forward from Mr. Harrison to the Scientific Panel.

II. BUSH-COAN MEMORANDUM CONCERNING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:

Drs. Bush and Conant placed before the Committee a
memorandum dealing with the question of establishing in the
United Nations organization some mechanism for international
control in this field. They pointed out in the discussion which
followed that the memorandum constituted only a tentative proposal
designed simply to raise the issue. In receiving the memorandum
the Committee felt, as did Drs. Bush and Conant, that consideration
of this question should be deferred until after the Potsdam Conference
when the full Committee membership would be available.

III. EXCHANGE OF CABLES WITH THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

As a matter of information, Mr. Harrison read to the
Committee his exchanges of cables with the Secretary of War re-
garding the outcome of the test. In this connection Mr. Harrison
raised the question whether a letter of congratulations should
be sent on behalf of the Secretary of War to Dr. Oppenheimer.
The Committee unanimously agreed this should be done.
IV. LEGISLATION:

Dr. Bush reported that Senator Magnuson of Washington was that day introducing a bill which followed closely the recommendations made to the President in Dr. Bush's report "Science - The Endless Frontier." Senator Kilgore probably would also introduce a bill which would not follow the report so closely.

At this point General Royall and Mr. Marbury, and two lawyers from the Manhattan District, Lt. Allan and Lt. Duff, joined the meeting to go over the draft bill which had been drawn up by General Royall and Mr. Marbury. It was learned that Lts. Allan and Duff had been working for some time in New York in gathering together materials pertaining to such legislation and had compiled a most comprehensive document. It was felt that they would be aided in their work by having the benefit of the Committee's discussion of the Royall-Marbury draft.

Mr. Harrison suggested that the Committee should not concern itself at this time with a line by line consideration of the bill but should confine its discussion to general principles.

a. Name of Organisation. It was agreed that the organisation established by legislation should be known as the "Commission on Atomic Energy."

b. Compensation. With regard to the members of the Commission it was felt that they should not receive a salary but rather a per diem so as to avoid making the
positions susceptible to political pressure. With regard to the administrator and deputy administrator it was agreed that salaries should be on the order of $15,000 and $12,000 respectively.

a. Composition. While it was agreed that no member should be named as a representative of any particular agency or interest, some divergence of view developed concerning the provision in the draft for two Army and two Navy officers out of a total of nine members. Dr. Bush favored a commission composed only of civilians, as did Dr. Coman; while General Royall pointed out that in view of the preponderance of the military aspect of this field and the greater likelihood of prompt Congressional action if this fact were reflected in the composition of the Commission, he felt that strong military representation was desirable.

Dr. Harrison suggested that the military interest would probably be adequately protected by the existing provision for a Military Board plus a new proviso to the effect that the President should be empowered to turn this field over to the military in time of war or threatened emergency.

General Groves expressed the view that it would be desirable to provide that some members should have military experience but not that such members necessarily serve as representatives of the Services.
d. Control over Research in the Universities.

Dr. Compton expressed concern about the sweeping powers given to the Commission over research. While he recognized the need for control of the material, he felt that it should be possible to devise some quantitative measure whereby university laboratories could use material and conduct experiments in this field without endangering national security while at the same time preserving considerable freedom to pursue basic research. Dr. Compton suggested that such a measure might be devised in terms of energy release. The Committee agreed that the bill should make some positive statement requiring the Commission to define some quantitative borderline. All agreed that the emphasis should be in the direction of freedom of research in universities to an extent not incompatible with national security.

e. Basic Research. Dr. Bush strongly urged that the bill should contain a positive statement of intent to the effect that the Commission should normally depend on the universities to carry forward the basic research program in this field. He pointed out that unless this were done the bill would be in direct conflict with his Foundation bill, and would be a serious deterrent to the healthy advance of fundamental knowledge in this field. The Committee was
in general agreement with this view.

f. Censorship. Dr. Bush felt that the censorship and security provisions of the bill were too broad. He suggested that the law should permit any publication of information in this field which did not endanger national security and should require the Commission to draw up rules which would implement this principle. It was generally agreed that the advantage which the United States has in this field might be lost if publication were too narrowly restricted.

g. Patents. It was generally agreed that the section on patents should empower the Commission to impose secrecy orders on patents and prevent issue if and when the Commission determined such action was necessary in the national interest.

h. Assets of the Combined Development Trust. It was agreed that provision should be made in the law to empower the Commission to take over American interests in any existing international agreements.

i. International Relations. Mr. Marbury pointed out that it was not necessary to spell out in the bill any powers with regard to entering into international agreements, for the power to enter into any treaties in this field would automatically stem from the law.
j. General Accounting Office. It was agreed that the bill should provide that the Commission would have relationships to the General Accounting Office similar to those of TVA, namely, that while the Commission would be accountable to the GAO it should be empowered to certify that certain expenditures were necessary in the national interest and not subject to detailed accounting.

k. Miscellaneous. Other suggestions made by the Committee members were as follows:

(1) General Groves. -- In addition to the four Boards named in the bill the Commission should be empowered to name "such other boards" as in its discretion appear necessary.

(2) General Groves. -- The Administrator should operate under general rules laid down by the Commission; he should not be required to secure specific approval from the Commission for individual decisions.

(3) General Groves. -- It would not be possible to render a "complete" inventory of the holdings of the Manhattan District in three months as provided in the subject draft. The reporting period should also be put on a fiscal rather than a calendar year basis.

(4) Dr. Rush. -- Clerical and administrative personnel should be under Civil Service, but scientific,
technical, and legal personnel should be exempt.

General Royall pointed out that the bill did not give the Commission any quasi-judicial power. The Committee agreed that it should not have such powers. The Committee also agreed with General Royall's view that no power need be given the Commission in the bill over exports and imports. It was agreed that the language of the law should permit the Commission to make payments for local taxes when circumstances so warranted.

It was agreed that Lts. Allan and Duff should redraft the bill so as to reflect the suggestions brought out at the meeting as well as the more extended comments which Dr. Bush and General Groves would prepare in writing.

V. NEXT MEETING

No definite time was set for the next meeting. Dr. Conant suggested that 2 August would be desirable from his point of view.

R. Gordon Alexander
R. GORDON AHRENSON
lieutenant, AUS
Secretary to the Committee.